



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



ARMENIAN EMBROIDERY, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

ECCLESIASTICAL EMBROIDERIES FROM THE NEAR EAST

A GROUP of ecclesiastical embroideries from the Near East is especially interesting just at this time when public thought has been so recently directed toward Armenia. The small collection comprises a mitre, an omophoron, and several fragments of other vestments.

When in the ninth century the Greek Church separated from that of Rome, the vestments retained the same general lines as those of the parent church, although certain features were modified or altered to meet the requirements of the ritual. Thus, in the East we find elaborate liturgical cuffs—which in a way correspond to the pontifical gloves of the western church—and the pointed mitre of Rome modeled in the form of a crown.

An Armenian mitre recently acquired by the Museum is of the crown type and dates from the seventeenth century. The foundation, originally of reddish purple velvet, is now worn threadbare; but the rich embroidery in metal thread has withstood the ravages of time and hard usage, and is still intact. The decorative scheme consists of a row of saints and apostles centering directly in front in the enthroned figure of our Lord bearing in his left hand the orb. At his right is the figure of Saint Peter, while on the left stands the Apostle Paul, with the remaining ten apostles arranged in order around the rim of the crown, each standing beneath a cusped arch supported by columns with foliated capitals, a style of arcaded pattern reminiscent of the opus anglicanum of the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries. The upper part of the crown is divided into quadrants, each with a central medallion figure representing one of the four evangelists.

In Egypt the mitre dates back to the early days of the Christian Church, tradition crediting its use to the patriarch of Alexandria as early as the fifth century. In Armenia, however, it is not recorded prior to the eleventh century, and there its use is not restricted to the patriarch; it is worn alike by priests, archdeacons, and bishops, but differs in form, the bishops retaining the Latin type dating from the time of Pope Innocent III in the early thirteenth century, while the priests wear the *sagvabart*, a form similar to that acquired by the Museum but less ornate.

The crown-shaped mitre of the Greek Church dates from comparatively modern times, it having come into general use in the East some time after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Its altered shape, based on the imperial crown, is said originally to have symbolized the quasi-sovereignty over the rajah population which Mohammed II, The Magnificent, was content to leave with the Patriarch.¹ In Russia, where the mitre was introduced with other vestments borrowed from the Greek rite at the time of the erection of the Russian Patriarchate during the reign of Czar Theodore toward the end of the sixteenth century, certain ceremonial significance attaches to the position of the cross, only certain metropolitans, and by prescription the Bishop of Kiev, having the privilege of wearing the cross upright. In this connection it is interesting to note how

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 18, p. 627—11th Ed.

closely this form of mitre follows in line the domes of the Kremlin, which in turn are reminiscent of the earlier mosques as, for instance, the tombs of the caliphs at Cairo, or again, in another field, the Hagios Eleutherios at Athens (eighth to thirteenth century). This type of dome with its arcaded windows appears to be reflected in the embroidered vestment with its row of saints and apostles and its architectural details, just as the mediaeval glass of France and England was reflected in the ecclesiastical needlework of a century later.

Perhaps of even more interest is the omophorion, a vestment in the Greek Church which corresponds to the pallium of Rome. According to Marriot, this particular feature of the Greek rite has been in use in the Coptic churches from the fifth century down to the present time and has been worn by patriarchs and metropolitans and by almost all of the Bishops of the East.¹ The omophorion consists of a strip of embroidery about eight inches in breadth and perhaps two yards long with an opening in the center through which to slip the head, the two strips hanging back and front over the chasuble. The present vestment is an unusually fine example, as it bears not only the name and birthplace of the maker in Cufic lettering, but as well the date 1338 of the Julian calendar. The subjects illustrated in the embroidery are founded on New Testament history and include the following biblical scenes: the Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Presentation to the Doctors, Entrance into Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost with four additional personages representing the evangelists. These are arranged in panels divided by bands of lettering similar to the *epitrachelion* or *patrasbil* illustrated by Butler,² a form of stole worn by the Bishops of the Coptic Church, almost identical in decoration with the present piece. This, however, is of Syrian origin, measuring eight inches in

width and nine feet in length, being considerably longer than the Greek vestment of the same type.

A strip of Armenian embroidery is also of interest, its quaint figures of saints being much more eastern in character than those shown in the mitre, which are typically western in many details, especially in the delineation of the features, the variety in the pose, and the lines of the drapery, the Armenian work in its stereotyped repetition showing little imagination. As in the mitre just described, the central motive is the figure of our Lord, in this case standing erect with the right hand raised in benediction, the left bearing the orb. On either side are six apostles, the Christ figure being repeated at the end, a fact which would suggest the use of the band in a circular way, as perhaps in a mitre which would bring the Christ figure in the center at the front and back—symbolic of the Alpha and Omega—flanked on either side by six apostles. The personages are placed between two bands of Cufic lettering, the lower one edged with a second band of conventionalized floral ornament. The piece dates from the seventeenth century.

Two other fragments of Near Eastern ecclesiastical embroidery may be classed as Byzantine of the thirteenth or fourteenth century. These have for their subject the recognition of Christ by the apostles after the resurrection, the first group with Saint Thomas absent, the second representing Saint Thomas, in the presence of the other apostles, touching the wounds; the scene has a strictly Byzantine setting and is worked, in exquisite technique, in gold and silver thread. The two panels in shape and size, while incomplete, suggest that they may originally have served as liturgical cuffs, which in the Greek Church are one of the most important vestments and in Russia are, as a rule, of elaborate embroidery richly embellished with jewels.

These embroideries are displayed in the Asia Minor section, E. 12; the mitre in the Room of Recent Accessions.

F. M.

¹ Quoted by Butler. *Ancient Coptic Churches in Egypt*, vol. II, p. 151.

² *Idem.* vol. II, p. 130